

AD-A093 686

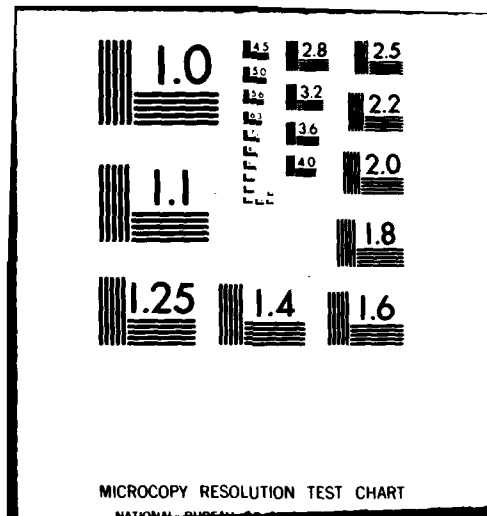
MARYLAND UNIV COLLEGE PARK COLL OF BUSINESS AND MANA--ETC F/6 5/9  
THE EFFECTS OF SELF-SET, PARTICIPATIVELY SET, AND ASSIGNED GOAL--ETC(U)  
JAN 81 G P LATHAM, H A MARSHALL N00014-79-C-0680  
6S-5 NL

UNCLASSIFIED

1 of 1  
AD-A093 686



END  
DATE  
FILMED  
2 -81  
DTIC



UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

LEVEL II

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

READ INSTRUCTIONS  
BEFORE COMPLETING FORM

AD A093686

1. REPORT NUMBER GS-5	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A093686	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER 686
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) THE EFFECTS OF SELF-SET, PARTICIPATIVELY SET, AND ASSIGNED GOALS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Technical Report
7. AUTHOR(s) Gary P. Latham and Herbert A. Marshall		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER GS-5
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Graduate School of Business Admin. DJ-10 University of Washington Seattle, WA 98195		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) N00014-79-C-0680
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Organizational Effectiveness Research Programs Office of Naval Research (Code 452) Arlington, VA 22217		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS NR170-890
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) (12) 13		12. REPORT DATE January 1981
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 8
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		16. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) brainstorming                      moderator variables goal acceptance                    participation goal setting                        productivity job analysis		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) A government agency wished to define effective supervisory behavior. Fifty-seven government employees participated in the job analysis. The employees were randomly assigned to one of three goal setting conditions, namely, self-set, participatively set, and assigned goals. The task required each individual to brainstorm individually job behaviors that he or she had seen make the difference between effective and ineffective job behavior as a supervisor. Goals were set in terms of the number of behaviors to be listed		

DTIC  
ELECTE  
JAN 8 1981  
S E

DDC FILE COPY

DD FORM 1 JAN 73 1473

EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 IS OBSOLETE  
S/N 0102-LF-014-8801

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

409855

81 1 08 050

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE(When Data Entered)

20. ABSTRACT (continued)

within 20 minutes. There was no significant difference in goal difficulty between those with participatively set goals and those with self-set goals. Goal difficulty was held constant between the participative and assigned goal conditions by imposing a goal agreed upon by an employee in the participative condition upon an employee in the assigned condition. There was no significant difference among the three goal setting conditions regarding goal acceptance or actual performance. This was true regardless of employee age, education, position level, years as a supervisor, or time employed in the public sector. The correlation between goal difficulty and performance was .62, .69, and .74, respectively, in the participative, self-set, and assigned goal conditions.

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE(When Data Entered)

THE EFFECTS OF SELF-SET, PARTICIPATIVELY SET,  
AND ASSIGNED GOALS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Gary P. Latham  
University of Washington

Herbert A. Marshall  
University of Waterloo

TECHNICAL REPORT GS-5

January 1981

Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	
A	

Reproduction in whole or in part is permitted for any purpose of the U.S. Government. This report was sponsored by the Organizational Effectiveness Research Program, Office of Naval Research (Code 452), under Contract No. N00014-79-C-0630.

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED.

THE EFFECTS OF SELF-SET, PARTICIPATIVELY SET,  
AND ASSIGNED GOALS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Abstract

A government agency wished to define effective supervisory behavior. Fifty-seven government employees participated in the job analysis. The employees were randomly assigned to one of three goal setting conditions, namely, self-set, participatively set, and assigned goals. The task required each individual to brainstorm individually job behaviors that he or she had seen make the difference between effective and ineffective job behavior as a supervisor. Goals were set in terms of the number of behaviors to be listed within 20 minutes. There was no significant difference in goal difficulty between those with participatively set goals and those with self-set goals. Goal difficulty was held constant between the participative and assigned goal conditions by imposing a goal agreed upon by an employee in the participative condition upon an employee in the assigned condition. There was no significant difference among the three goal setting conditions regarding goal acceptance or actual performance. This was true regardless of employee age, education, position level, years as a supervisor, or time employed in the public sector. The correlation between goal difficulty and performance was .62, .69, and .74, respectively, in the participative, self-set, and assigned goal conditions.

**THE EFFECTS OF SELF-SET, PARTICIPATIVELY SET,  
AND ASSIGNED GOALS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES**

A review of both laboratory and field studies on the effects of setting a specific hard goal prior to performing a task shows that specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance than easy goals, "do your best" goals, or the setting of no goals at all (Locke, Shaw, Saari & Latham, 1980). This is one of the most robust and replicable findings in the psychological literature with 90% of the studies showing positive results (Locke, et al. 1980).

A second finding that has received modest support in the goal setting literature is that there seems to be few consistent differences between assigned and participatively set goals with respect to productivity (Dossett, Latham & Mitchell, 1979; Latham & Saari, 1979a,b; Latham, Mitchell & Dossett, 1978). That is, when the goal difficulty level is held constant, performance is the same regardless of whether the goal is assigned or decided upon mutually by a supervisor and a subordinate.

The above finding has been demonstrated only twice in a field setting where the phenomenon was investigated using a rigorous experimental design. In those two studies (Dossett, Latham & Mitchell, 1979), female clerical workers employed in private industry were involved in the validation of a selection test, and were later studied in the context of three consecutive performance appraisals.

In the validation study, Dossett et al. found that the performance of employees who participated in setting their goals as to the number of items they would answer was not significantly greater than individuals who were

assigned goals. In the performance appraisal study, assigned goals resulted in higher performance and greater goal acceptance than did participatively set goals. However, there was no significant difference on these measures between the two goal setting conditions after the second and third appraisal periods 4 months and 8 months after the initial appraisal.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the importance of assigned versus participative goal setting in a second field setting. A government agency was interested in defining effective supervisory behavior. The authors suggested that one approach to job analysis would be to have employees list what they believe, on the basis of first-hand observation, constitutes effective job behavior. This suggestion is in accordance with the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act (see Latham & Wexley, 1981, for an overview). In brief, the Act states that each federal agency should develop appraisal systems that encourage employee participation in establishing performance standards. The standards are to be based on critical elements of the job.

Because of the emphasis on employee involvement in establishing standards, we decided to investigate self-set goals in addition to assigned and participatively set goals. The goals set dealt with the number of standards or individual job behaviors that each person could list as critical for performance as a supervisor.

The importance of goal setting to this task is that a job analysis must yield content valid information. That is, it must yield information that constitutes a representative sampling of the critical job behaviors in question. If each person contributing to the job analysis lists only three or four



behaviors, the job analysis may yield information defining effective supervisory behavior that is not comprehensive.

### Method

#### Subjects

The subjects were 57 supervisors in a governmental agency. The supervisors were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: participatively set, self set, and assigned goals.

#### Procedure

All subjects were told that a job analysis was being conducted to define effective supervisory behavior. The importance of obtaining comprehensive information was stressed.

Employees in the self set goal condition were asked to specify the number of observable behaviors that they could list within 20 minutes. It was emphasized that the goal should be difficult but attainable.

In the participative condition, the authors used the results from a pilot study to determine whether a goal was "difficult but attainable". If the goal set by an employee was too high or too low, the individual was reminded that the goal should be truly difficult, but attainable; "are you sure that a goal of \_\_\_\_ fits that description?" The person was then asked to set another goal.

Three employees, one in each condition, were run concurrently. Thus, it was possible to assign the goal agreed upon by the experimenter and the individual in the participative condition to the employee in the assigned

condition. The people in this latter condition were told that results from previous work conducted by the authors indicated that this was a reasonable goal for them to attain.

In each condition, the employees were told to number their ideas so as to provide knowledge of results regarding goal attainment, and to continue working regardless of goal attainment until the 20 minutes elapsed. Before the employees began working, the experimenter made the statement: "Remember your goal is at least \_\_\_\_ ideas."

#### Goal Measures

Productivity was defined as the number of job behaviors listed. Goal acceptance was measured by responses to a three item, 7-point scale. The items were as follows:

- (a) To what extent did you accept the goal?
- (b) How difficult did you perceive the goal to be?
- (c) How reasonable did you perceive the goal to be?

#### Moderator Variables

Individual differences in personality and demographic information were measured to determine if they acted as moderators of the goal setting condition-performance relationship. The personality variables of interest in this study were: internal-external control, need for achievement, need for affiliation, need for autonomy, need for dominance, achievement via conformance and achievement via independence. Internal-external control was measured by using a shortened version (25 item) of the I-E Scale (Rotter, 1966). The four items dealing with education were deleted. The needs for achievement, affiliation, autonomy and dominance were measured using the Manifest Needs Questionnaire

developed by Steers and Braunstein (1976). Achievement via conformance and achievement via independence were measured by using the two appropriate scales taken from the California Psychological Inventory by Gough (1956). Demographic information examined included age, education, occupational category, level in the organization, number of years in supervision, number of staff supervised, and time employed in the public sector.

## Results

### Manipulation Check

Each individual was asked, "In relation to the experimenter, to what extent do you feel you influenced the goal which was set?" A one-way analysis of variance indicated that the experimental conditions differed significantly ( $F=46.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The individuals in the self set ( $\bar{X}=6.21$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ) and the participative conditions ( $\bar{X}=5.74$ ,  $SD=1.63$ ) believed they had significantly more influence in setting the goal than did individuals in the assigned ( $\bar{X}=2.47$ ,  $SD=1.68$ ) condition ( $t=8.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $t=6.09$ ,  $p<.01$ , respectively). There was no significant difference between the perceptions of those with self set versus participatively set goals, even though the experimenter in the latter condition was permitted to "jaw-bone" if the goal set was unrealistically high or low.

### Goal Acceptance

A series of one-way analyses of variance indicated that the individuals in the three goal setting conditions did not differ significantly in their responses to the goal acceptance items in total or individually. All individuals accepted their goals.

### Performance

Goal difficulty was held constant between the assigned and participatively set goals. The goal that was agreed upon jointly by the experimenter and an employee in the participative condition was assigned to an employee in the assigned condition. This was obviously not possible in the self-set condition. Thus a t-test was conducted to see if self-set goals were significantly different from those set in the participative condition. The means and standard deviations were 12.84 (SD=7.52) and 12.42 (SD=6.47) for the self and participatively set conditions, respectively. This difference was not significant.

Goal attainment did not differ significantly among the three goal setting conditions. Eighty-four percent of the people in each condition attained their goals.

Productivity, as defined by the number of items generated, did not differ among the three conditions. The means and standard deviations for the self-set, participative, and assigned goals were 15.00 (SD=5.93), 18.26 (SD=9.12) and 16.63 (SD=8.08), respectively. The correlation between participative, self-set, and assigned goals with performance was .62, .69, and .74, respectively. These correlations were significant at the .01 level. There was no significant difference among these correlations.

### Moderator Variables

The employees were split at the median with regard to their scores on the personality tests. No main or interaction effects were obtained. Similarly, no main or interaction effects were found for employee age, years of post-secondary education, position level, number of staff supervised, number of years in supervisory positions, or time employed in the public sector.

### Discussion

Previous research has consistently shown that specific hard goals lead to higher performance than not setting goals (Locke et al., 1980). The present study provides further support for the proposition that the issue of how a goal is set is not as important as whether the goal is set (Latham, Mitchell & Dossett, 1978; Meyer, Kay & French, 1965). Participation in itself does not appear to affect productivity. Nor does giving an employee a complete say in decision making appear to affect productivity. The key issue to productivity appears to be the setting of specific goals.

The theoretical value of this study is that it has extended the external validity of this finding to a different task, namely job analysis, and to a different population, namely government employees.

## REFERENCES

- Dossett, D. L., Latham, G. P., & Mitchell, T. R. The effects of assigned versus participatively set goals, KR, and individual differences when goal difficulty is held constant. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1979, 64, 291-298.
- Gough, H. G. Manual for the California Psychological Inventory (Rev. Ed.). Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1969.
- Latham, G. P., Mitchell, T. R., & Dossett, D. L. The importance of participative goal setting and anticipated rewards on goal difficulty and job performance. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1978, 63, 163-171.
- Latham, G. P., & Saari, L. M. The effects of holding goal difficulty constant on assigned and participatively set goals. Academy of Management Journal, 1979a, 22, 163-168.
- Latham, G. P., & Saari, L. M. The importance of supportive relationships in goal setting. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1979b, 64, 151-156.
- Latham, G. P., & Wexley, K. N. Increasing Productivity Through Performance Appraisal. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1981.
- Locke, E. A., Shaw, K. N., Saari, L. M., & Latham, G. P. Goal Setting and Task Performance: 1969-1980. Technical Report, Office of Naval Research, N00014-79-C-0680, 1980.
- Meyer, H. H., Kay, E., & French, J. R. P., Jr. Split roles in performance appraisal. Harvard Business Review, 1965, 43, 123-129.
- Rotter. Psychological Monograph, Vol. 80, Whole No. 609, 1966.
- Steers, R. M., & Braunstein, D. N. A behaviorally-based measure of manifest needs in work settings. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1976, 9, 251-266.